

Farm Policy and the Rise of Chronic Disease

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Outline of Talk

- Agriculture systems are producing too much of the wrong kinds of food
- Increased production is a direct result of policy choices
- Rising production of certain foods is closely correlated with a rise in chronic disease worldwide, even in poor countries
- Our current agricultural policies may well be unaffordable from health and economic perspectives

Agricultural policy affects health in surprising ways

- On a global level, a complex network of market, policy, and behavioral choices

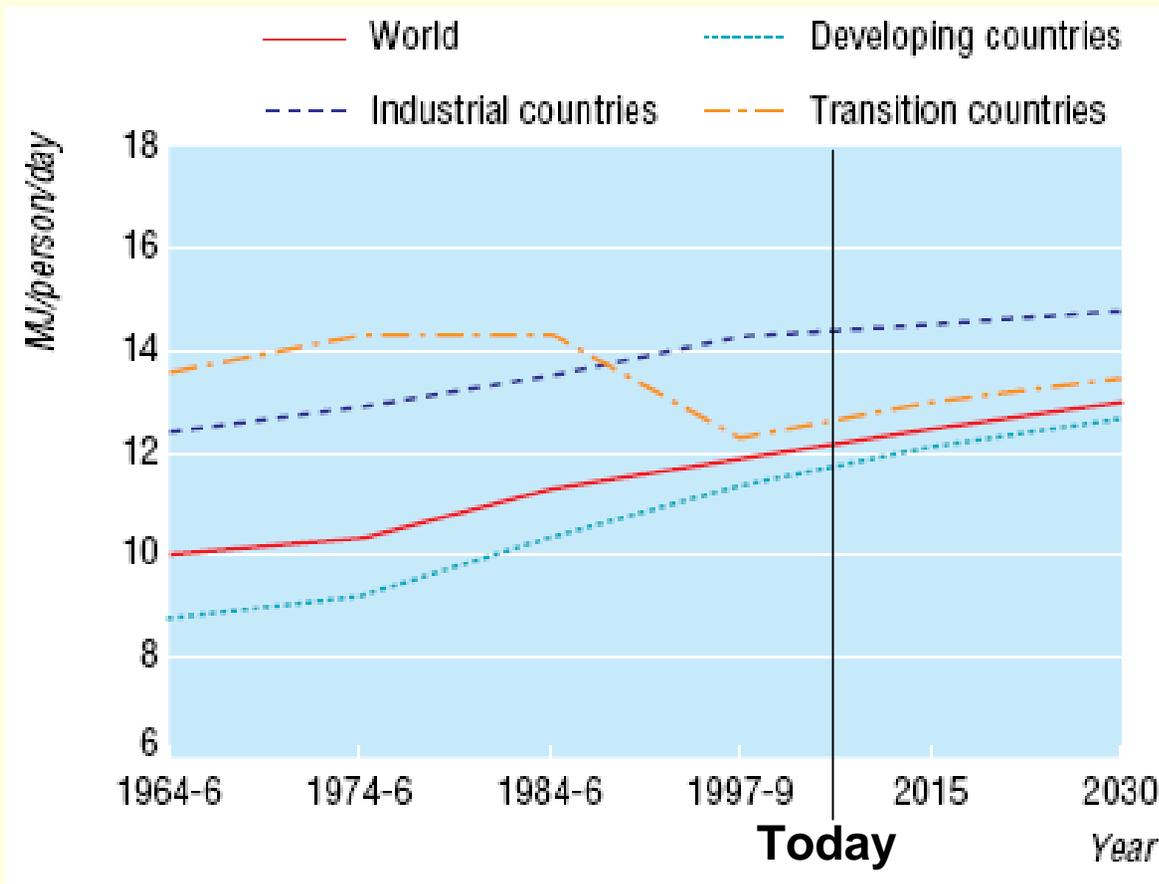
Agricultural policies → Food System → Nutrition → Health

- At the individual level, a simple equation governs:

Energy balance = diet + physical activity

Global dietary energy imbalance

Dietary energy availability, 1964-2030



- Agricultural productivity increasing faster in developing countries
- Demographic transition means lower population growth and older populations
- Less physical activity with shift to industry and services, changing leisure
- Declining undernutrition

Shift to chronic disease



Deaths, % of world total, 2005

Chronic diseases:

Heart disease
30.2

Cancer
15.7

Diabetes
1.9

Other chronic diseases
15.7

Infectious diseases:

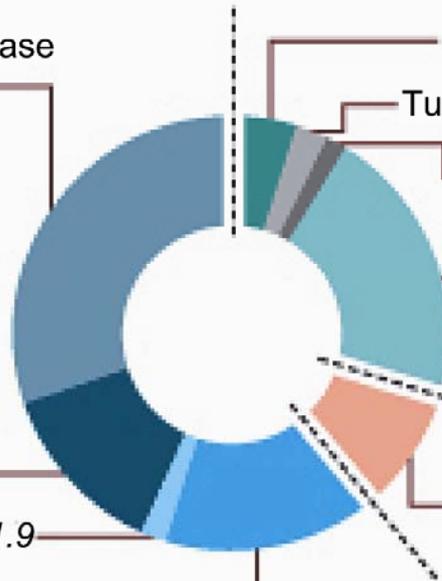
HIV/AIDS
4.9

Tuberculosis
2.4

Malaria
1.5

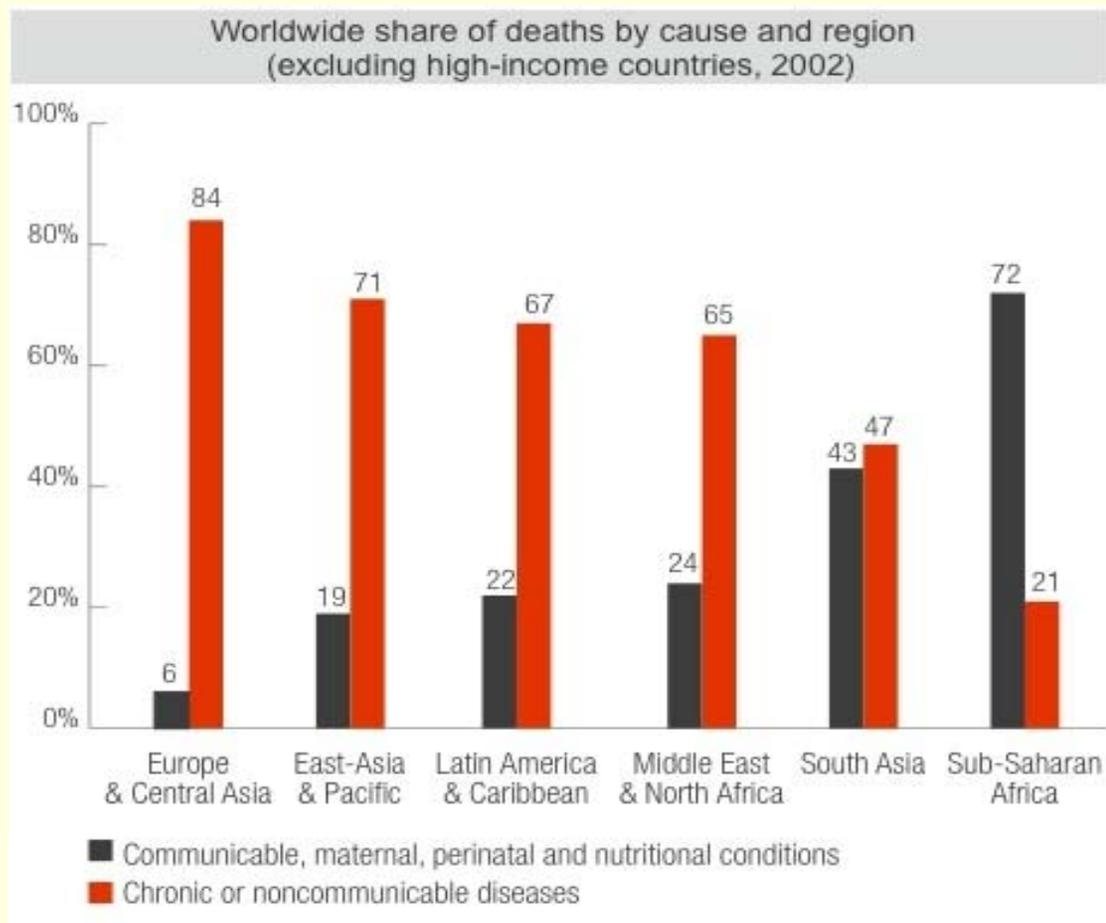
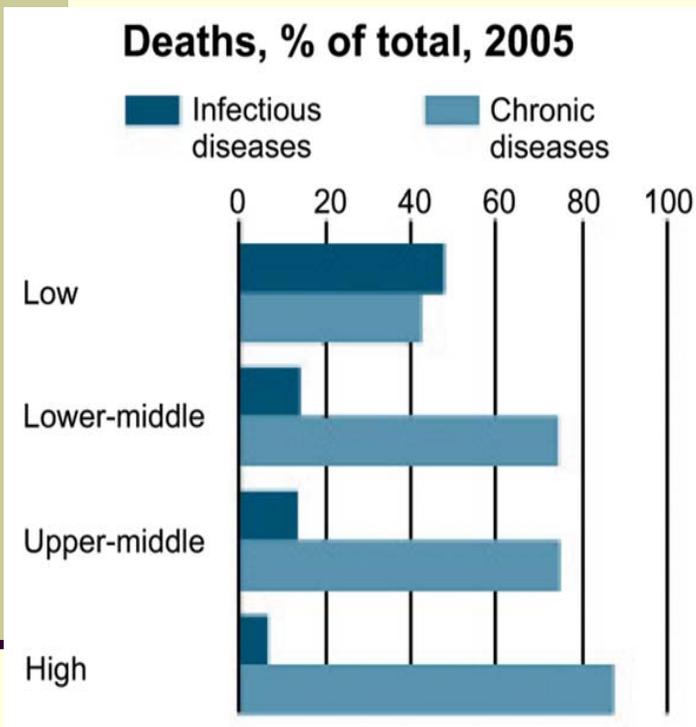
Other infectious diseases
20.9

Injuries
9.3

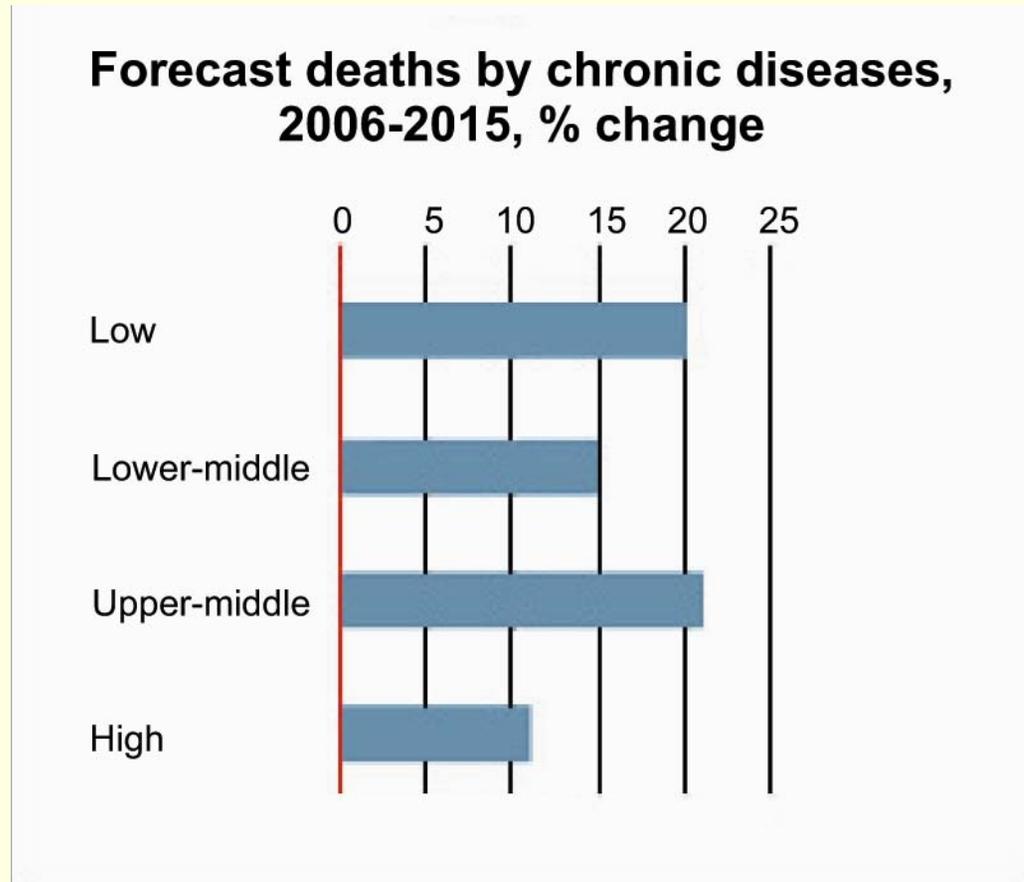


Source: WHO adapted from *The Economist* 8/9/2007

The big surprise: chronic disease in the developing world



Chronic disease deaths to increase



Source: WHO adapted from *The Economist* 8/9/2007

What is the role of agricultural policy?

Alters the makeup of the food supply

Production Policy

Price support
Direct income payments



Input Policy

Investment in infrastructure
Subsidies for chemical inputs
Research support
Credit subsidies
Water subsidies



Trade Policy

Tariffs & NTB's
Export promotion
Market access arrangements

Consumption Policy

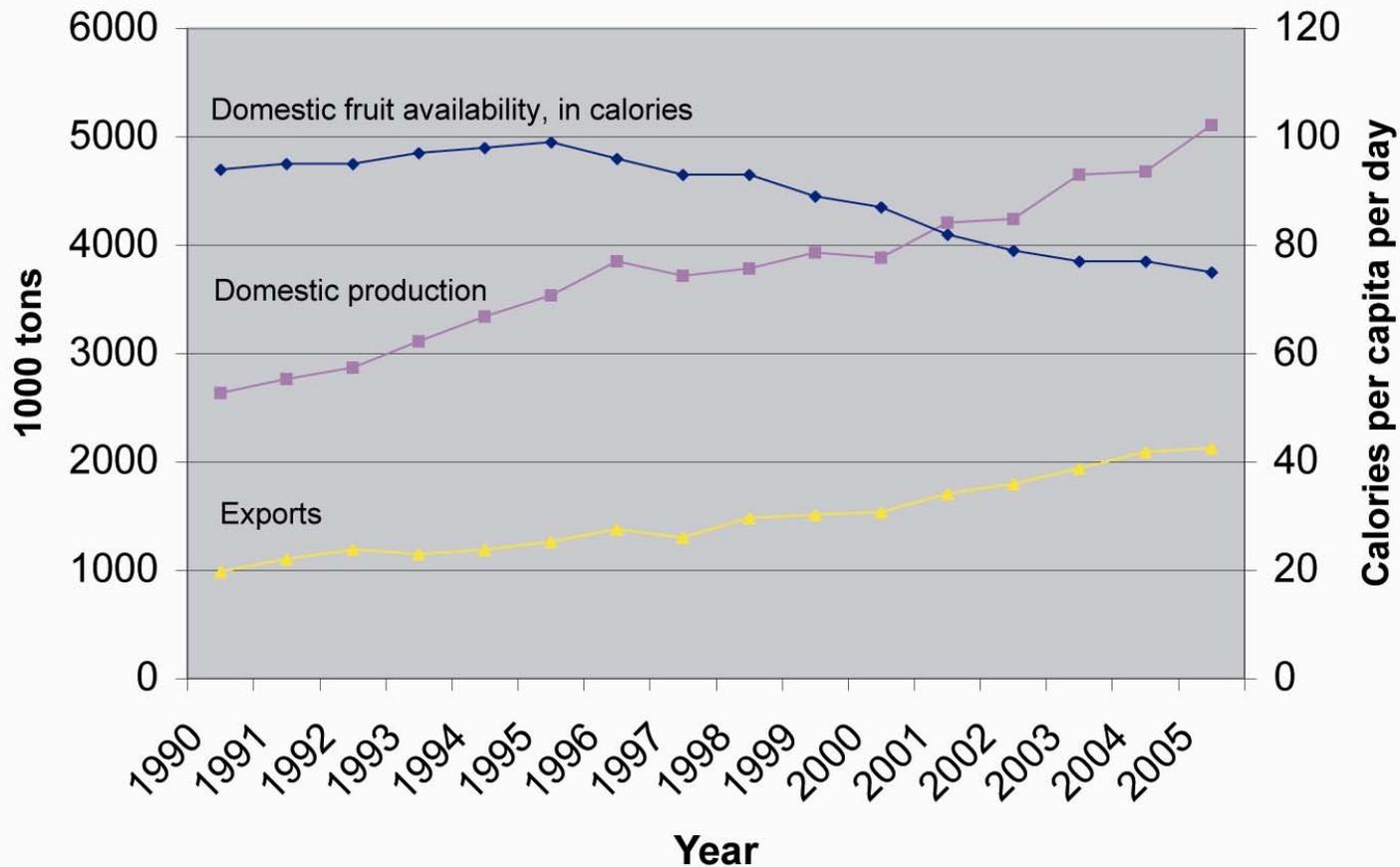
Nutrition programs
Food aid
Marketing support

US agricultural policy effects on health

- Corn and sugar subsidies and trade barriers
 - Cheaper sweeteners, fat, processed food and meat
- Research emphasizes higher yields, size, shelf life; not nutrition
- Ignores fruits & vegetables
 - US import demand raises world prices
 - Less availability of fruit and vegetables in producing countries

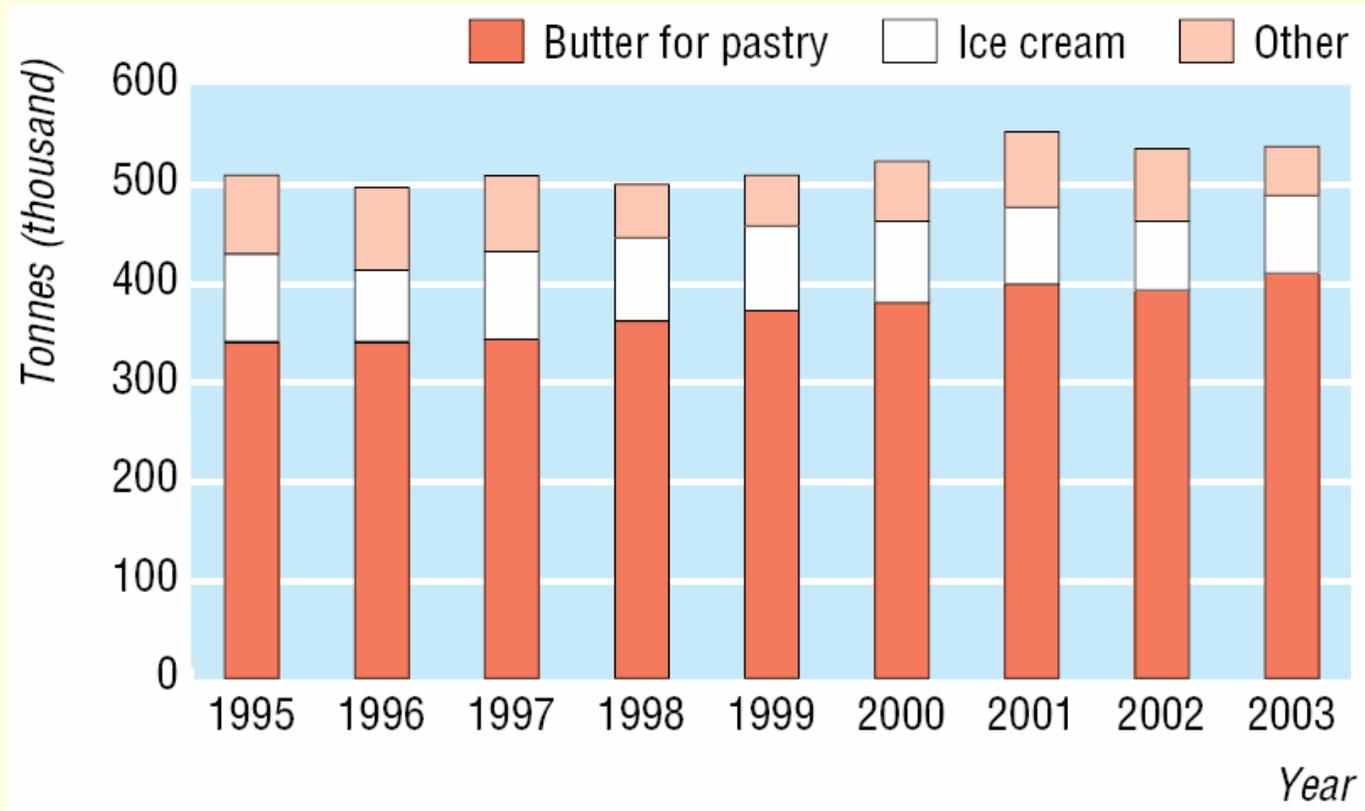


Chilean fruit production, exports and consumption, 1990-2005



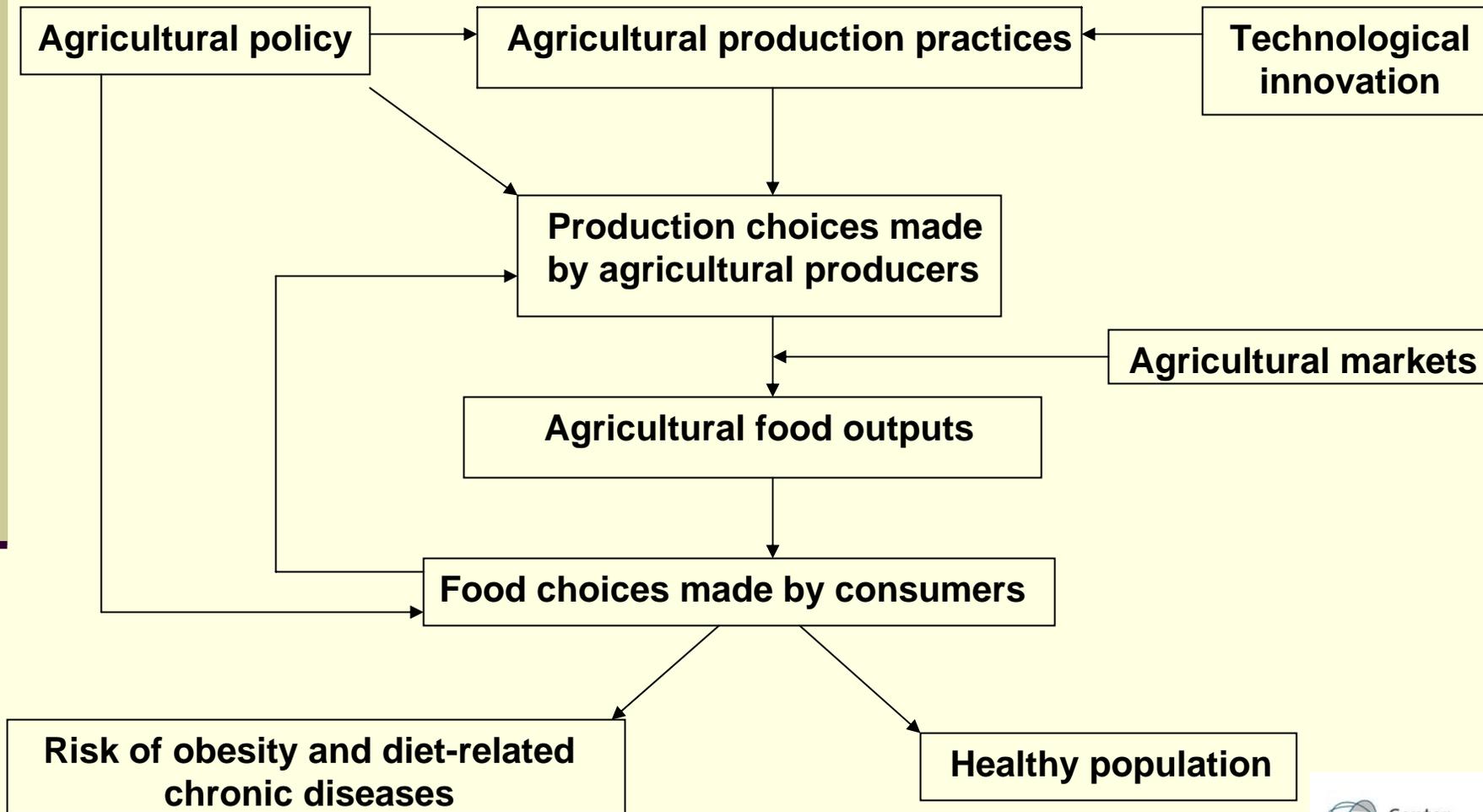
Source: FAO

The EU and dairy



EU butter sold at subsidized rates
to food processing industry

Basic framework of policy levers



A costly agricultural policy

- \$350 billion to support agriculture in OECD countries (2003)
- Chronic diseases cost EU and US a combined \$1.7 trillion in 2005
- How to better align agriculture and health needs?
- Can developing country health systems afford current agricultural policies?